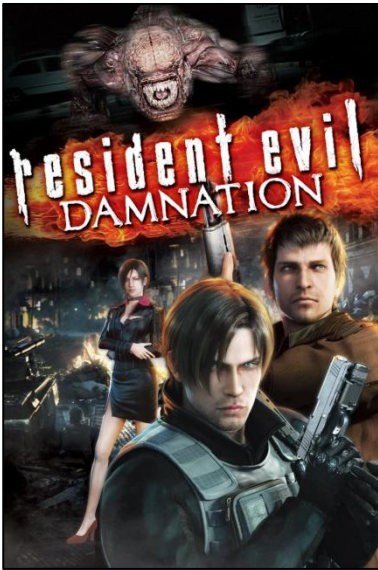


On DVD

“Resident Evil: Damnation”



By Jayson Burns



Paul W. S. Anderson’s film adaptations of the survival horror games Resident Evil (or Biohazard in Japan) haven’t exactly been given much praise. Really, though, this can be said for almost every movie based on a video game (but I stand by the first Mortal Kombat movie, which was ironically directed by Anderson as well). So if these adaptations are so bad, why hasn’t the games’ developer, Capcom, done it? This is where “Resident Evil: Damnation” comes in, the second Resident Evil film by Capcom which proves that a hands-on familiarity with the source material doesn’t automatically lead to a good film.

Sometime after Resident Evil 4, series protagonist Leon S. Kennedy (Matthew Mercer) has been dropped into the Eastern Slav Republic, a nation plagued by a violent revolution. What Leon is more concerned with, however, is the rumored use of BOW’s, bio-organic weapons created by the same virus that turns people into hungry zombies. Despite the U.S. government demanding he leave the Republic to its fate, Leon pursues the source of the BOWs with the help of the rebels. What he doesn’t know is that his old femme fatale foil, Ada Wong (Courtenay Taylor), is working behind the scenes with the nation’s government for her own mysterious reasons.

What any fan of the games will instantly appreciate is that the movie takes place in the same continuity of Capcom’s series and has nothing to do with Alice’s escapades in the Anderson films. That said, anyone unfamiliar with the video game might get a little lost on some things, like who the characters are or how someone has managed to create 10-foot-tall monstrosities. Despite the opening monologue, the audience is practically thrown into the situation without a background to make them really care (the country itself is completely fictional). The motivations of the antagonists are a little weak as well.

Where Anderson’s latest “Resident Evil: Retribution” had Johann Urb do a Dolph Lundgren impersonation for Leon, Damnation casts the same voice actor for the character in this year’s “Resident Evil 6.” Matthew does a good job with the character (I did not realize it wasn’t the same guy who voiced him in Resident Evil 4), even if he kind of disappears in the background for some scenes. Courtenay Taylor is also taken from her performance of Ada Wong in “Resident Evil 6,” and while she also keeps to the established character she only really seemed to have one tone of voice. Everyone else was entirely forgettable, except maybe Val Tasso as the rebel JD, who was too over-the-top to not be likable.

Taking Capcom’s last attempt, “Resident Evil: Degeneration,” into consideration, the computer generated effects and motion capture have improved, but only a little bit. Characters’ facial expressions are a little more animated this time, but sometimes to the point where they don’t match their tone of voice. This might be because Damnation was filmed initially for a Japanese audience, but that’s not a good enough excuse. The audience is also expected to believe a good deal of ridiculousness, like Leon brushing off a blow to the back that should’ve paralyzed him (at the very least). Still, the scenery is gorgeous and gory, whatever it needs to be for the scene, and some of the action is well put together.

“Resident Evil: Damnation” is proof that even the creators of the game can fail at making a good movie. And where was Hunk? He is long overdue for a film debut ...

This movie is rated R.